

Spain's Struggle

AGAINST

**ANARCHISM
AND
COMMUNISM**

by

REV. GENADIUS DIEZ, O.S.B.

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THE present Spanish Civil War has attracted and still is attracting the attention of the whole world. There are many different views concerning its causes, its nature and its significance for the future of the nation. Those views are so varied and so contradictory that most people, relying perforce for their information on what they hear or read, are thrown into confusion and so find themselves unable to form a clear opinion and logical conclusion of the situation.

I am not at all surprised that there should be such confusion of thought because a clear understanding of the true causes, the true nature and the real significance for the future of the present civil war require some knowledge of the political, social and religious history of Spain of at least the last century and a half, and especially of the last five years. I am sorry, though compelled, to say that this knowledge is not common in the United States even among those who make bold to voice opinions on these problems. The lack of this historical information is the cause of the muddled explanations given by the large number of writers who have sprung up almost overnight as self-appointed authorities on Spain. They give me the impression of being unable to see the woods for the trees. They see the events, the commotions that are agitating Spain, but they fail to per-

ceive the nature of the forces which have produced these events, which have created this violent commotion.

Yet, for the majority of Spaniards, even for those with little education, the situation presents little or no difficulty. They may be on one side or the other, but as to the issue each group is fighting for, there is no difference of opinion, no misunderstanding. The battle lines are clearly drawn. On one side are the forces of Anarchism and Marxism, with a sprinkling of less demagogic Leftists, and on the other side are the forces of those Spaniards, who could not resign themselves to seeing the Spain they loved, thrown into chaos by Anarchism or disfigured beyond recognition by International Marxism, so diametrically opposed to all the national institutions and traditions of Spain, especially to her religion and her family life.

The French Influence

To get a clearer view of the whole situation, let us throw the picture that is before our eyes against the dark background of Spain's modern history. Spain began to decline rapidly and in almost every sense as soon as the Spanish rulers began a slavish imitation of everything that was French against what was genuinely Spanish. This aping of French patterns was carried on at double speed after the Spanish throne passed from the House of Austria to that of the Bourbons. In this connection it must be remembered that the fad invaded not only the throne and the aristocracy, but also that class of men who even then posed as "intellectuals." Only the Church and the lower classes remained mentally and spiritually loyal to the Spain of the Reconquest, the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella.

Then came the French Revolution whose ideas rushed across the Pyrenees into Spain like a mighty torrent. While the monarchy and the aristocracy made confused efforts to stop them, the so-called "Intellectuals," who were already imbued with the doctrines of the French Encyclopedists, drank them avidly and considered them a sure cure, a panacea for all the ills, real and imaginary, that afflicted their country. Again the Church and the lower classes remained loyal to what was genuinely national. And when the generals of Napoleon invaded the Peninsula, it was not the monarchy, it was not the aristocracy, and it was not the "Intellectuals" that rose against the foreign invaders, but the clergy and the common people. This gigantic struggle, however, though it did free her from a foreign yoke, left her sick and bleeding and her population decimated.

To bring her back to health and strength required and demanded the joint efforts of all. But what happened instead? The restored monarchy thought only of regaining all its absolutism, while the "Doctrinaires" that worshiped at the feet of the three-headed goddess of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" could devise nothing better than to meet in secret societies and flood the country with cheap literature destined to undermine the very foundations upon which the organization of Spanish society rested. The advocates of the established order became known as Conservatives, while the followers of the French ideas were called "Liberals." These two groups threw themselves headlong into a political struggle that was to keep Spain in a state of chronic turmoil, misery and helplessness for the next hundred years.

The word "liberal" as applied to politics in Spain, as well as in other countries of continental Europe,

meant much more than just progressive views regarding forms and functions of government, or new and advanced ideas concerning economic and social problems. Continental liberalism did not stop there. It went much farther and invaded the field of moral ethics and even of theology, and aimed at the absolute domination of the Church by the State. It was this invasion of fields which did not belong to them that brought the liberals and the Church into unreconciled opposition to each other on many issues such as education, marriage, relations between Church and State and so forth, for while the Church will gladly compromise on all purely material things, she will never, even in the face of persecution, yield her rights in the fields of morals and dogma.

The struggle between Conservatists and Liberals plunged Spain into a state of turmoil that was to last for over one hundred years. There were plots and counter-plots, local riots and uprisings and more than one civil war. In the seventies a Republic was established with three presidents in one year, but it was unpopular and lasted less than two years. Once more the monarchy was restored, but the state of unrest continued.

Radicalism and Labor

Towards the end of the century two new forces entered the arena, Anarchism and Socialism. The Spanish Anarchist began almost from the cradle to work for the establishment of his utopian state with the "*highly constructive and democratic*" instruments of gun, bomb and torch. As for Socialism it must be said that the Spanish type has never had a really constructive program, and for the last twenty years or so it has been going at forced marches to-

ward extreme radicalism until today in Spain there is practically no difference between Socialism and Communism which became noticeable on the Spanish scene only a few years ago. They therefore may be rightly grouped together under the common name of Marxists.

Both Anarchism and Marxism chose the industrial centers of the nation for their special fields of action and each organized powerful labor unions. The Anarchists developed their "National Federation of Labor" by terrorism while the Socialist "General Union of Laborers" became powerful—and this may surprise many a reader—mainly by the unofficial support it received time and again from the governments of the monarchy and from the Dictator Primo de Rivera himself. The latter mistakenly, although in good faith, believed that Socialism could be induced by concessions to abandon its program of class war and revolution.

Thus we find the governments of the monarchy, both liberal and conservative, and the dictatorship fostering the growth of the Socialistic labor unions while opposing directly or indirectly the formation of Catholic unions of the type of those that had been organized in Belgium. Under those conditions the Anarchist and Socialist unions gradually obtained what was in practice equivalent to a labor monopoly until the majority of the workers had to join one or the other, or else bring starvation to themselves and to their families.

Uncompromising opposition to every kind of government was the attitude of the National Federation, while the General Union was used by the Socialist leaders to undermine by every possible means, including revolutionary strikes, all the State organisms

so as to bring about the establishment of the proletarian dictatorship. Such in broad lines was the political and labor situation in Spain at the time of the downfall of the monarchy in 1931.

The Church

As for the Church during those one hundred years of political turmoil and labor unrest and aggressiveness, she was constantly harassed and persecuted, first by the so-called Liberals, working in coöperation with the Grand Orient of Paris, and later by Liberals, Socialists and Anarchists. The nineteenth century saw the storming of monasteries and the massacres of monks in Madrid and other cities, the dissolution of the religious orders with confiscation of all their properties and the destruction, among other things, of their magnificent libraries, the nationalization of Church properties and many other attacks on ecclesiastical organisms. The religious orders were later allowed to establish themselves anew but their properties were never returned.

In the twentieth century the Church had to suffer attack after attack by the same forces, and in 1909 the Anarchists of Barcelona did in a week of red terror to churches, priests, monks and nuns very much as they have done in the past three months.

Let us come closer to our day and see what has taken place in my unfortunate Spain since the downfall of the monarchy in April, 1931. The Republic came amidst the rejoicing of many, the misgiving also of many and the hostility of others. The Church for her part, while entertaining no illusions as to the future, for the ideas and the plans of the Republican leaders were well known to her, accepted the Repub-

lic from the beginning and was willing to give it her full coöperation. The Republican leaders in order to win for their cause the popular support made themselves appear rather conservative and not at all opposed to religion, by placing at their head Alcala Zamora and giving the second most important portfolio, that of the interior to Maura, both Catholics.

But as soon as they thought that their positions had been consolidated, they threw off their masks and about the middle of May, 1931, without any provocation, secret orders were issued for the burning of churches in Madrid and in other places. When the Minister of the Interior, Maura, got wind of what was going to happen he went to the cabinet and asked for authorization to use the police and the civil guards to prevent it, but he was refused the authorization he wanted and needed, and the riots and burnings went on. Thereupon Maura tendered his resignation, but the cabinet, fearing the effect of this on public opinion, begged him to stay on and granted him the authorization that previously had been denied to him, and forthwith Maura with a mere display of force put an end to all church-burning in less than twenty-four hours.

In connection with these unprovoked burnings, Azana, the present puppet-head of the Madrid government and the man whom so many misinformed people call "liberal" and "democrat," had the effrontery to say that all the Church buildings in Spain were not worth the life of a single republican. During the preëlectoral campaign for the constituent assembly, not a single candidate had the nerve to come out openly against the Church and the religious bodies of the people; on the contrary, they all took pains to cause the impression that there would be no

infringement of religious rights and Alcala Zamora in an eloquent speech at Valencia declared that the patron saint of that city, St. Vincent Ferrer, would be the patron of the new republic, and that the Archbishops would be called in as advisers.

Of course the well-informed were not to be deceived by these rosy promises. They knew their men, but unfortunately a majority of the people were easily lured by the songs of sirens, and unwittingly they sent to the Cortes a majority of extreme radicals. No sooner had these radicals assembled in Parliament than they showed their true colors and began without any regard for the conscience of the majority of the people to pass legislation contrary to the most elementary rights of the Church.

Most foreigners seem to be under the impression that there was no persecution, that the only thing the constituent assembly did was to separate the Church from the State. Would to God that this had been the only thing the Republic had done to the Church! I with the majority of Spanish priests and Catholics would bless it for it, because the Church's union with the State served only to bring upon her the blame for the sins of the government, sins in which she had no part.

But the first Republican Cortes did much more: They deprived the Church of juridical personality; it deprived her of the right to have cemeteries for her own children; it deprived her of the right to have schools; it deprived Catholic marriage of all civil effects; it nationalized all her property, movable and immovable; it suppressed the Jesuits, and issued such regulations against the other religious orders that the boastful Azana said that if these regulations did not do away in a few years with all the religious

communities in the nation, he would declare himself a failure.

As for the treatment individual priests and Catholics received from the republican authorities, let it suffice to say that priests and laymen were fined or imprisoned under the most ridiculous pretexts, and that Catholic officials, including judges, were summarily dismissed because of their religious beliefs and practices. The case of a judge of Zaragoza who was dismissed by the Minister of Justice, Alborno, solely because he had received in his house one of his own brothers who was a Jesuit, is a good illustration of the persecuting policy of the government. If this was not a persecution, then what in the name of logic and reason is a persecution?

Under these conditions it was only natural that the Catholic press should protest, and it did so, but Azana, the boasted liberal and democrat, answered their arguments with repeated fines and prolonged suspensions, and sending Catholic leaders into exile.

However, his repressive measures could not silence the voice of popular discontent which daily became louder and louder until finally the President, realizing that the situation could not go on like this any longer, demanded the resignation of the cabinet. Thereupon a new government was formed headed by Martinez Barrio—today one of the principal leaders of the popular front—and the Cortes were dissolved.

In the general election that followed, the center and the conservative parties won a clear majority. However they were too numerous and their programs too diverse to allow the new Cortes to do much constructive work. On top of this the President of the Republic, called repeatedly but mistakenly a "fer-

vent Catholic" by the foreign press, refused constantly and against all canons of democracy and government by parliament to summon to the premiership Gil Robles, the leader of the Catholic Republican Party—the largest single party in the Cortes.

In October, 1934, the Marxists and the Catalanian Separatists who had been arming secretly during the two years of Azana's government, took up arms in a desperate attempt to establish dictatorship of the proletariat and to separate Catalonia from the rest of Spain. But the revolt was speedily suppressed in Catalonia by General Batet, a Catalanian himself, and in Asturias by General Ochoa, a professed anti-clerical and high-degree Freemason. For the next twelve months the life of the nation remained relatively peaceful but the political situation passed from entanglement into entanglement until there appeared only one possible solution, namely, to call in Gil Robles to form a new cabinet. This, however, President Zamora would not do.

After the rising of the Marxists and Catalanian Separatists in October, 1934, had been suppressed, President Zamora still refused to adopt the only reasonable solution for the involved political situation, namely, to summon Gil Robles, leader of the Catholic Republican Party, the largest single party in the Cortes, to form a new cabinet. Rather than do this, Zamora violated parliamentary practice and had a new cabinet formed with Portela Valladares, a non-member of Parliament and a known anti-clerical and Freemason, as Prime Minister. As this new cabinet could not possibly count on the support of the Cortes, the latter were dissolved and a new general election announced.

Portela, a consummate political boss of the old

style, immediately began preparing the ground for a defeat of the parties of the Right by a wholesale replacing of provincial governors and other important officials with his own creatures and by artificially creating a new party which he called of the Center and to which he gave the unequivocal support of the government that was only supposed to preside over the elections as arbiter or umpire.

No impartial observer, acquainted with the doings of Portela during that preëlectoral campaign and during the day of the election itself can have any doubt that his tricks robbed the parties of the Right of a sure victory. To this must be added the campaign of intimidation conducted by Anarchists, Socialists and Communists against persons of the Right. On the day of the election itself bands of radicals devoted themselves to the terrorizing of voters in numerous places. Of course, under similar conditions it was only too natural that hundreds of thousands of voters, lacking protection, should become the prey of fear and, accordingly, should abstain from going to the polls, or should even vote for the Left. But, even so, the Rightists would most probably have won the election if Portela had not handed over the reins of government to the representatives of the Popular Front before the election results from some provinces had been returned, thus making possible the breaking of ballot boxes in many places where the Right had won decisive victories. However, the accomplished fact was that the "Popular Front" obtained a majority of seats in the new Parliament.

The "Popular Front"

But from this to the truth of the claim that the Popular Front government was elected by a popular

vote there is a far cry as can be seen by a look at the official data on the results of the election issued by the National Board of the Census. According to the Board's report, the following was the number of votes cast for the different contending parties. For the Right, 4,570,744; for the Popular Front, 4,356,559; for the parties of the Center, 340,073, and for the Basque Nationalists, 141,137. Over four million abstentions.

From the above figures it can be clearly seen that the parties opposed to the Popular Front, even without including the Centrists, had a majority of more than 200,000 popular votes. Hence one must realize, whether he likes it or not, that more than one-half of the nation was never with the Popular Front. But this evident fact was utterly ignored by the Popular Front Parliament and Cabinet, which forthwith embarked upon a mad career of demagogic legislation and measures against everything and everybody that did not belong to the Front, while for their part the Anarchist and Marxist labor unions plunged into an orgy of burning and destruction of churches—about 400 in five months—of art treasures, of newspaper plants and of political centers of the opposition parties; of assassinations of political enemies, not to say anything of the thousands of Rightists that were thrown into prison only because of their political opinions. To all this we must add the hundreds of revolutionary strikes, local and general, that paralyzed completely the economic life of the nation.

The aims of the Anarchists and of the Marxists—the only ones that really counted within the Front—were evident. The former aimed at throwing the nation into chaos that they might achieve the realization of their utopian dreams. As for the Marxists,

they followed the carefully and cleverly devised plans of the Third International sent to them by Dimitroff. These plans consisted in refusing any direct participation in the cabinet, in going through the farce of giving the government their support in the Cortes, and in weakening and discrediting that same government by means of strikes and continuous disorders outside of Parliament, thus preparing the ground for the establishment of their Marxist dictatorship.

In the midst of all these persecutions and disorders, the opposition had no means to defend itself. While the elements of the Front were free to do as they pleased, to calumniate, to threaten and even to incite to murder in their press organs, and to form armed militia that marched in parade under the red flag through the streets of Madrid and other cities singing "Internationale," shouting "down with Spain, long live Russia!" and threatening the hated bourgeoisie with complete destruction, the opposition was not permitted to hold a single meeting of protest, the conservative press was muzzled, and all the Rightist organizations were dissolved or threatened with dissolution, and the prisons of the nation, built for criminals, were filled to overflowing with thousands of persons whose only crime was that they belonged to some Rightist party.

Ruthless Excesses

Do not think that I am exaggerating. Even some Socialist leaders realized the danger of the situation, and seeing the tremendous reaction that was taking place throughout the nation counselled moderation, but the Marxist unions paid no heed to their voices and listened instead to Largo Caballero who even before the general election, addressing a meeting of his

followers on January 22d, had said to them: "If one day things should change, the Right must not expect mercy from the workers. We shall not again spare the lives of our enemies. . . . If they, the enemies, do not let themselves be defeated by ballots, we shall have to defeat them by other means—until finally we are able to plant the red flag of Socialism wherever we choose.

L'Ere Nouvelle, a Leftist French paper, one of whose assiduous collaborators is Herriot, had this to say after two months of Popular Front government in Spain: "From the first of March disorder reigns throughout the whole country. And what disorders! In almost all the large centers the elements of the extreme left have undertaken a campaign of violence, which all democracy must condemn."

On their part the two most prominent deputies of the Right—Gil Robles and Calvo Sotelo—brought to Parliament long lists of acts of terrorism perpetrated by elements of the Front and demanded a cessation of a state of affairs that was driving more than half of the nation to desperation. Gil Robles in one of his many parliamentary interventions addressed thus the deputies of the Left: "Gentlemen, do not deceive yourselves; more than half of the nation will not resign itself to die, I assure you. If it cannot defend itself in one way, it will do so in another. Against your violence, another violence shall arise, and to the Public Powers will fall the sad rôle of witnessing a struggle which will ruin the nation materially and spiritually. Civil war is on the one hand forced by the violence of those who wish to scale the heights of government by the path of revolution, and on the other hand it is nourished and fostered by the criminal apathy of a government which dares not turn against its aux-

iliaries—*the Anarchists and Marxists*. (Italics mine.) . . . If you do not rectify soon your policies, in Spain there will be no other solution than a red dictatorship, or a brave and energetic self-defense on the part of those citizens who cannot allow themselves to be trampled under foot. . . . I do not come here to beg mercy; I demand from the government only justice. I do not threaten, but let it be known that if civil war should some day rage over Spain, it will be because the arms are being loaded by a government that does not know how to do its duty." And Gil Robles closed his intervention with these words that expressed faithfully the sentiments of millions of Spanish hearts: "For the sake of our country we are even willing to disappear from the political stage, but our withdrawal must not be a cowardly one, delivering our necks to the enemy; for it is preferable to know how to die on the street to being trampled under foot through cowardice."

It would seem that the solemn words and warnings of such outstanding deputies as Gil Robles and Calvo Sotelo should have brought the government and radical deputies back to their senses, but they were intoxicated with pride, hatred and ambition, and to the arguments of the two Catholic leaders they replied only with mocking jeers and with veiled and even open threats to their very lives. Thus the radical deputy Galarza, today a minister in the Madrid cabinet of Largo Caballero, told Calvo Sotelo in full Parliament that any violence would be lawful against him, and Calvo Sotelo fell dead riddled with Leftist bullets. And Gil Robles was told in the same place by a Communist member: "Senor Gil Robles, I do not know how you will die, but I do know that you will die with your boots on."

I could go on and on citing instances of Anarchist and Marxist terrorism between the months of February and July, but I think that what I have said will be sufficient to make the reader see the Spanish Anarchists and Marxists as they really are and to make him realize that the other Spaniards who loved their country, who loved their religion and their families, and the national institutions, and who longed only for peace and order, had no alternative but to take up arms against a government that had ceased to be a government and had become a hostile faction.

Here in America they persist in calling the Popular Front supporters "Loyalists," "Liberals," and "democrats." What a farce! Call them "Loyalists," forces that are traitors to everything that is national? Call them "Liberals" and "democrats," those who advocate anarchy or class dictatorship? And on the other hand, the forces that are fighting for the integrity of the nation, for their national institutions, for their religion and for their families, are called "Rebels" and "Fascist." Why Rebels, I beg to ask? Because they refuse to be oppressed and killed? And why Fascist? Because they rose against a tyrannical and factious government, because they oppose armed force and the establishment in their country, where individual, personal freedom has always been sacred, of a Marxist dictatorship?

If that were enough to make one a Fascist, then the word Fascist would be a title of honor. But no, the forces of Franco and Mola are not Fascist and they are not Rebels. The radicals call them Fascist because they do not accept Communism. They are simply patriots fighting to save the soul of Spain. It has been said that the troops of Franco and Mola are composed of hired mercenaries. Can we call hired

mercenaries those thousands upon thousands of youths who come to enroll in the white armies singing: "No llores, madre, que me voy a las armas; el cuerpo no vale nada, todo lo valen las almas." "Do not cry, mother, because I take up arms; the body is worth nothing but the soul is worth everything," and who march into battle with the cry "Long live Catholic Spain!" "Long live Christ the King!"

Why the Church Is Persecuted

Before concluding, allow me to refer briefly to something that I am sure is in the minds of all, namely, the brutal hostility that the Marxists and Anarchists have shown towards the Church and the reasons for this hostility. In this regard I need not go into detailed account of the atrocities committed against religious persons and things. All know of how hundreds of churches have been razed to the ground by fire or dynamite, of how religious statues have been decapitated, profaned and burned amidst the insulting jeers of the mob; of how Bishops, priests and monks have been hunted down and shot down on sight like desperate criminals, and how innocent women have been taken from their cloisters, delivered to packs of human beasts for the satisfaction of their bestial appetites, and then put to death, some being crucified like their Divine Spouse.

Did the Church deserve to receive such treatment at the hands of those whom she had endeavored in vain to befriend? She had given those people free schools, free hospitals and hospices and asylums; she had given them food when they were hungry, and she had time and again raised her voice before the ruling and wealthy classes, though in vain, de-

manding social justice for the masses. Still she is being persecuted with truly diabolical hatred. Why? Because the Anarchist and the Marxist, both materialistic and atheistic know very well that in a Catholic land no Anarchist or Marxist rule can succeed without crushing the Catholic Church, and accordingly they have persistently sought to kill the idea of God in the souls of the workers by poisoning their minds and hearts by the most slanderous propaganda against the Church and her ministers. This propaganda is so clever that when I think of its poor victims I am reminded that Our Lord said, referring to the days preceding the end of time, namely, that even the elect would be deceived, if it were possible, unless those days should be shortened.

Their work has been cleverly done. However, the immense majority of the Spanish people still have the faith of their fathers deeply rooted in their hearts, and the murders and sacrileges with which the Spanish soil is being desecrated will only serve to increase and intensify the religious life of the nation, for, as Tertullian said in the third century of the Christian era: "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church."

THE "WEALTH" OF THE CHURCH IN SPAIN

Since the civil war broke out in Spain on July 18th, I have heard time and again from Catholic laymen and even from priests, and read in almost all the magazine articles dealing with the present Spanish situation that have come my way, the accusation that the Church in Spain possessed too much wealth and that this has quite naturally brought upon her the hatred of the poor working classes.

Is such an indictment based on fact, or is it on the contrary only a calumny that by the force of repetition has come to be accepted as truth? I am afraid that most people, even Catholics, with no knowledge, or at the best very superficial knowledge of Spanish history, when hearing or reading this devastating charge against the Church just take it for granted without any serious thought of investigating its validity. Yet how far from reality is such an assumption!

There was a time in Spain, as indeed everywhere else in Europe, when the Church was wealthy beyond dispute, but every impartial student of history will admit that, while this wealth gave origin to some occasional abuses, on the whole it served a most beneficial economic and social purpose in the life of Christian Europe. Everybody knows how churches and monasteries were founded and endowed, usually with grants of land, by kings, princes and nobles, and other individuals, and how these churches and monasteries continued to receive from time to time additional free-will-offerings in the form of new lands or of money from pious persons. The wealth thus accumulated became quite considerable, and with the passing of years and centuries perhaps out of proportion with the total wealth of the nation.

But it is a long, long cry from the present to those days of plenty, which were only the natural product of the religious, social and economic order of things then prevailing in Europe. Let us see what has become of the so much talked-about wealth of the Church in Spain, and then my honest readers will not be so ready, I am sure, to believe the calumnies scattered far and wide, in season and out of season, by the professional denigrators of Catholic Spain.

In Spain, the nineteenth century was ushered in with the aggressive philosophy of the French Revolution. The accompanying revolutionary cry "Liberty, Fraternity, Equality" sounded loud and burned itself into the very souls of vast numbers of people who saw in it the panacea for all the evils that beset the world, and these people, looking into the future through the magnifying lenses of their illusions, became transformed into ardent and even fanatical advocates of a new order of things. The apostles of the new gospel, desirous of an immediate change in the national structure and impatient with all opposition, attacked the Church from the very beginning, because it seemed to them to be in the way of their aspirations.

The "New Order"

They did not understand that what to them seemed opposition on the part of the Church to whatever was legitimate and noble in such aspirations, was rather wisdom and prudence, for she can never be a party to violent changes which often result only in confusion and destruction, whereas her mission is to build, and build for eternity. These attacks against the Church culminated in 1835 in the storming of monasteries and the suppression of all the

orders of monks and of their property by the minister Mendizabal. In 1837 the confiscation of Church property by the Cortes followed.

It goes without saying that such high-handed spoliation of the patrimony of the Church in Spain, as in all other nations where it has taken place, benefited only a relatively small number of clever individuals.

Conditions in Spain continued to be extremely turbulent for the rest of the century, and hardly had the Church been given a moment of rest when the ascent to power of a new "liberal" ministry was the signal for a new series of persecutions and spoliations against her. However, as such chaotic conditions could not last forever, with the subsiding of political passions religious orders were once more authorized to establish themselves in the Peninsula. But it must be borne in mind that this authorization did not imply restitution of confiscated property, and consequently the new communities in most cases had nothing, except their faith and the charity of private benefactors, with which to start the work of reconstruction.

"Church Support by the State"

With the improvement of relations between the Church and the State an agreement was finally reached, by virtue of which the Church on her part consented to leave in undisturbed possession of her stolen property those who held it at the time and their future heirs, while the State promised to pay, as a partial restitution, a yearly indemnity in the form of salaries to the members of the secular clergy—not to the religious orders. Here it must be noted

that this indemnity was only a small percentage in value of what had been taken from the Church. This was the famous support of the Church by the State.

And to what did it amount? I have not at hand exact figures, but I can assure the reader without any fear of being contradicted that the salary paid to the immense majority of priests did not amount to \$300 a year. It may be argued, however, that they had other sources of income. No doubt, that must have been the case in some of the large city parishes, but how sadly different it was in the others! The immense majority of parishes in Spain are located in rural districts, and the people of those places, while certainly not starving, cannot give the Church or the priest any material support worth mentioning, for they need every cent to meet the needs of their own families, as a rule quite large.

I myself come from one of those rural districts, and I think I can speak with a first-hand knowledge of conditions there. As an illustration of how much the priests can count on "those other sources of income," let me say that in my own parish, which is by no means of the poorest, the priest gets very few Mass stipends in the course of the year, and the ones he gets do not amount to much—about 20 cents for a Low Mass and about 40 cents for a High Mass. The stipends for all other services are correspondingly low.

Three years ago I visited a number of priests in their homes, and I can say in all truth that a common ordinary laborer here in America has a much better house and lives better than those priests. In short, if the priests' calumniators, instead of condemning them from some luxurious, or at least comfortable room in one of the modern hotels of Madrid

or Barcelona, went out to them and became acquainted with their mode of life, they would very soon discover that the wealth of the Spanish clergy can only be found in the biased imagination of their enemies.

"Wealthy Prelates"

Well and good, some one may answer, granted that the parish priests are poor. Can the same, however, be said of Bishops, canons, and religious orders? Yes, in general it can be affirmed without hesitation. When examining the lists of ecclesiastics attending Eucharistic Congresses or other religious international assemblies do we find many Spanish names? We do not. Is it, perhaps, because the Spanish Bishops and canons and other priests would not love to attend those Congresses, would not, at least, like to travel? They would indeed, but in spite of all their "wealth" they cannot afford it.

Those of my readers who have read the history of the Vatican Council will perhaps remember that, according to non-Spanish eyewitnesses, the Spanish Bishops, who were able to attend, were strikingly noticeable for their poverty. As for the religious orders, I have already stated that they were suppressed in 1835 and that all their movable and immovable property was confiscated. Later they were allowed to reëstablish themselves where they could, but they never got back their confiscated properties, with the exception in some cases of buildings from which, however, all that was worth anything had been stolen.

That one or the other Congregations may have, perhaps, been able since then to overcome the initial financial difficulties and to put it again "on Easy

Street" through a wise administration or through donations from generous benefactors is quite possible and even probable, but what of that? Do not religious communities have needs that can be met only with material goods? Can religious schools, and hospitals, and orphanages, and asylums, and missions, etc., etc., be founded and maintained without money?

There was something, however, in which the Spanish Church was still materially rich till 1931, namely in old Cathedrals and in religious vessels and vestments and other similar treasures, but even this non-negotiable wealth was taken from her five years ago when the first Republican Cortes nationalized all that pertained to the Church.

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